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# The Worth of the Old Testament

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S  
CATHEDRAL

ON THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT  
DECEMBER 3, 1890

BY H. P. LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.

CANON AND CHASELOR OF ST. PAUL'S

SECOND EDITION

*Revised and with a new Preface*

RIVINGTONS  
WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON

1890

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## *PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.*

IN consequence, no doubt, of some unsettlement of minds respecting the claims of the Old Testament, several requests for the publication of this sermon have been addressed to the author. The sermon itself, as will be seen, deals with a very small part of a vast subject; and it does this in terms which, without more explanation and proof than is possible in the circumstances, may appear to be too peremptory. Nevertheless, it represents, however imperfectly, a serious conviction which appears to justify its publication.

3, AMEN COURT, E.C.,

*Epiphany, 1890.*



There was obviously  
much controversy over  
this as the preface which  
follows is an essay, compared  
w. the first  
and some of his notes to the  
sermon are much longer.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE call for a second edition of this sermon affords an opportunity for noticing some observations, chiefly private, that have been made on one portion of it.\*

It is asked why the critical discussion of the historical and moral worth of the Old Testament cannot proceed without any reference to our Lord's authority at all. Criticism, it is urged, handles only questions with which He was not concerned, and upon which He passes no judgment.

Now, here it may be at once and unreservedly admitted that a great many subjects of Old Testament criticism can be debated and settled, in more ways than one, without reference to our Lord, because, however they are settled, they do not traverse His explicit language, or anything that may be implied in His sanction of the Hebrew Canon. The questions, for instance, of the date and authorship of the Book of Job—apart from that of its character as history, or

\* Pages 19-25.

fiction, or fiction based on history—have alone created nothing less than a considerable literature. But however these questions are settled, it does not clearly appear that our Lord's authority is even indirectly affected.

On the other hand, as is pointed out in this sermon, there are persons and events and compositions in the Old Testament Scriptures, on which He has condescended to bestow particular notice, and which, in consequence of that distinction, acquire a character, at least in Christian eyes, which would not otherwise have belonged to them. And if His notice has been of a kind to imply, even incidentally, the truth or falsehood of modern critical theories about any particular subject of His notice, that circumstance will govern a believing Christian's judgment. Take, for instance, our Lord's reference to Ps. cx., with a view to raising the question of His Divinity.\* In making that reference, He was not giving a profitable turn to a topic which had been previously raised by the Pharisees. He was not making use of a popular conviction in such a manner as to imply that, even if false, it might serve His purpose, and that He did not commit Himself to sanctioning it. On the contrary, He chose His own ground. No one had uttered a word about Ps. cx. when He asked the question how the Jewish teachers could say that Messiah was

\* St. Matt. xxii. 41-46; St. Mark xii. 35-37; St. Luke xx. 41-44.



David's son, while David,<sup>a</sup> in this psalm, calls Him his Lord. Now, supposing it to be an ascertained "result of critical inquiry"<sup>b</sup> that Ps. cx. belongs to the age of Simon Maccabæus, and, indeed, refers to him, it is singular that our Lord's appeal to it should have passed unchallenged.<sup>c</sup> Would not at least some one scribe, more learned than the rest, have exclaimed, "David doth not call Messiah 'Lord' in the verse Thou quotest; the psalm speaks of Simon, whom our fathers' grandsires saw as boys." But if His hearers knew not how to expose what is, on the hypothesis, the gross irrelevancy of the quotation, can we conceive how He, being what He is, could have made it? Was the real date and object of the poem as unknown to Him as to the rabbins and peasants around Him? Or, knowing what

\* St. Mark and St. Luke have αὐτὸς Δαβὶδ, implying the personal author of the psalm, not the literary designation of the book (St. Mark xii. 36; St. Luke xx. 42).

<sup>b</sup> In justice to Ewald, who was wont to "Maccabæanize" as many psalms as he could, his opinion as to the date of Ps. cx. should be noted. *Dichter des A. Bundes*, ii. 56: "Da auch die sprache des kurzen Liedes nicht widerstreitet, so ist wohl als gewiss anzusehn, das der König David sei." Ewald does not say that David was the author of the psalm, as our Lord's use of it teaches us. But he has no doubt that it belongs to the age of David.

<sup>c</sup> It is difficult to understand how, even in an "uncritical" age, a body of men like the Jewish scribes and rabbins could have come to think that a composition was a thousand years old, if it was in reality less than two hundred? People in England would have to be very uneducated indeed in order to imagine that a poem written in the days of Queen Anne was really of the age of Alfred the Great.

“criticism” professes to have ascertained to be the truth, did He advisedly trade upon popular ignorance? did He essay to build up upon a foundation of falsehood belief in the central truth of His religion—His own Divinity? Surely it must be obvious that in this instance it is impossible to ignore the true ground of His authority, or the fact that, if He is indeed All-wise and All-good, He has settled at least one question which no believing critic can presume to reopen.

But our Lord’s relation to the Old Testament is by no means confined to those particulars in it which He has selected for especial notice. He has sanctioned it as a whole. And, at least in the case of all Christians who are not of Jewish descent, it comes from Him directly. As all Christians whatever receive from the Catholic Church the books of the New Testament, and those books of a secondary order of inspiration, which the modern sense of the word “Apocrypha” unduly depreciates; so do Christians of Gentile birth especially receive the Sacred Canon of the Hebrews from our Lord Himself. Had He never come among us, the nations of Europe would, in all probability, have known much less about the literature of Israel than about that of Greece and Rome; if, indeed, they would have known anything about it. As it is, at this hour the Hebrew Canon comes to us, not from the Jewish people or Sanhedrin, but from His Blessed Hands Whom they pierced; and it is on His authority that

we believe writings like the Song of Solomon or Esther,—in which it may be thought that the internal evidence of a Divine inspiration is comparatively weak,—to be a part of the Book of God.

Now, bearing this in mind, what are we to say, for instance, about Professor Wellhausen's statement that the tabernacle, which, according to Exod. xxv., *sqq.*, was erected at the command of God as the basis of the theocracy, and which in outward details was the prototype of the temple, never had any real existence at all, but was a creation of the imagination of the age of Ezra? <sup>a</sup> The assertion is not, indeed, altogether new. Von Bohlen <sup>b</sup> and others had projected the theory that all the commands and descriptions relating to the tabernacle were suggested to some late and unknown writer by the actual arrangements of the temple, only with such modifications as the supposition of their existence during a term of migration and wandering might render necessary. Thus, instead of a tabernacle historically preceding the temple, the temple would have given rise to the idea of the tabernacle. Wellhausen, indeed, elaborates this position with characteristic ingenuity and completeness; and, in truth, it is essential to his general doctrine of the so-termed "Priestly Code." But what are we to say of its bearing upon the worth of the books which our Lord has so

<sup>a</sup> *Prol. Hist. Isr.*, i. 3. Cf. *Comp. d. Hex.*, p. 137, *sqq.*

<sup>b</sup> *Hist. and Crit. Illustrations of Genesis* (Eng. trans., Lond.: 1862), i. 174, 175.

solemnly commended to us? What becomes of the many persons, occurrences, lessons, which are connected with the tabernacle: of the history of its construction; of the changes in its position; of the solemn meetings with God of which it is said to have been the scene; of its movements, so carefully described, from place to place during the wanderings; of its stations—at Gilgal, between Ebal and Gerizim, at Shiloh; of its loss of the ark through capture by the Philistines; of its several associations with Samuel, with David, with Solomon? The whole is an elaborate fabrication; a solid, variegated block of falsehood, lodged in the very heart of a literature which yet is said to have come from God! How is such a supposition reconcilable, it must be again asked, with the authority of Him Who has so solemnly commended to us the Books of Moses, and Whom Christians believe to be too wise to be Himself deceived, and too good to deceive His creatures?

Or, take a theory which has been more distinctly recommended to notice in England, to the effect that the long and important discourses ascribed to Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy were never uttered by Moses at all, but are the invention of a writer of the age of Josiah. In order to apologize for such a theory, it seems to be thought sufficient to observe that the practice of attributing to great men speeches which they did not make, and which the writer knew he was himself inventing, was familiar to pagan historians. Certainly

no sixth-form boy at Eton or Harrow would think of crediting Pericles with the speeches which Thucydides puts into his mouth ; but then the *History* of Thucydides makes no pretence to be in any sense a sacred book, and nothing whatever depends upon the question of the authorship of the discourses attributed to Pericles and others. If the old Psalmists of Israel knew that "lying lips should be put to silence," and that "God would destroy them that speak leasing," it is hardly likely that the composers of the sacred Hebrew books would have indulged in wholesale fiction without reproach from their own consciences, or without the reprobation of their countrymen. The laws of truth and falsehood do not vary, as is sometimes now rashly asserted, from age to age ; and if the author of Deuteronomy or of the Chronicles is only said to have idealized, or to have indulged in some needful illusion, when he was really writing fiction that should pass as truth, men disguise from themselves and from others, by gentle and misleading phraseology, the real nature of the act which they attribute to the sacred writers. It is inconceivable that, if Deuteronomy and the Chronicles were composed in the manner that is now asserted by some adherents of the new school of criticism, these books could ever have been organs of the Spirit of Truth, or could have been recommended to us by Him Who proclaimed before His judge, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I

into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth.”<sup>a</sup>

The appeal to our Lord’s authority, then, cannot be regarded by a Christian as a species of *à priori* argument, introduced in order to foreclose or arrest the more audacious efforts of unbiassed scholarship and free conjecture operating upon the sacred text. For His authority is as vital an element in the settlement of controverted matters respecting the Old Testament as is the science of language or the science of history, and—it must be added, in our present circumstances, even although the addition should appear to be ironical—of greater weight. The appeal to Him in these Old Testament questions really corresponds to a reference to an axiom in mathematics, or to a first principle in morals, when some calculation or discussion has for the time lost itself in details which shut out from view the original truth on which all really depends.

The consideration under review is put in another and more effective way by a friend who pleads that, in questions of theological truth, we must avoid arguments from consequences. Ought we, he asks, to fear the results of Old Testament criticism, only lest they should lead us to reject some doctrine like the Divinity of our Lord?

Not to notice the fact that arguments from consequences have very high sanction, it must suffice to say that, in matters of theological truth,

<sup>a</sup> St. John xviii. 37.

they cannot often be altogether set aside with impunity. An argument from its consequences, indeed, cannot imperil the certainty of a proved fact. But such an argument may be fatal to a view, to a line of thought, to a method of treatment, to an hypothesis. And these are in the main the real materials and tools of schools of criticism which, often enough, would have little to say, if they had only facts at their disposal. If, for instance, it be plain that a particular line of thought is making for dogmatic atheism, that will be a reason, with a serious theist, for distrusting or abandoning the line of thought in question, because, as a theist, he already holds the existence of God on stronger grounds than any that can be produced to warrant the line of thought. And if it be obvious that certain theories about the Old Testament must ultimately conflict with our Lord's unerring authority, a Christian will pause before he commits himself to these theories. He will reflect that he has stronger reasons for his confidence in our Lord than for yielding assent to the theories in question, and he will accordingly, at the least, suspend his judgment about them, if he does not forthwith modify them or dismiss them from his mind.

The present writer is well assured that of those who have, in whatever sense or degree, committed themselves to certain modern destructive opinions about the Old Testament, some are at this moment at least as anxious as himself to uphold and teach

the Catholic Faith in Him Who, being "perfect God and perfect Man," is "not two, but One Christ," and Who, therefore, when He speaks, can only speak unerringly. But the history of religious conviction is fertile in surprises; and it constantly happens that a man may find himself to have accepted the premisses of an infidel conclusion before he knows where he is. With younger men, at any rate, the writer would venture to plead for hesitation in matters where so much is at stake.

Profoundly interesting as must be the least important inquiry that concerns God's earlier Revelation of Himself, there is a question compared with which the most important that can concern it, sinks at once into utter insignificance. That question is whether He with Whom, in life and in death, we Christians have to do, is a fallible or the infallible Christ.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,

*4th Sunday in Lent, 1890.*

argument: if it's true enough for Jesus to quote,  
it should be true enough for us.  
- true in the sense that it is quoted from  
an historical context, not a literary context.



## THE WORTH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

ROMANS xv. 3, 4.

*For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

WHEN St. Paul makes the general assertion, that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,” he is, as is often his wont, answering an objection which he does not state. The objection which he feels will arise in the minds of his readers is that portions of the Old Testament—“things written aforetime”—and particularly the passage which he has just quoted, are not so well suited for Christian instruction as he has assumed to be the case. His purpose in making the quotation was to bring about a more brotherly feeling than then existed between the two great divisions of the Roman Church—the converts from Judaism, and the converts from heathenism. There was a great deal of friction between these classes; it became especially ap-

parent in their differences respecting the kinds of food which might rightly be eaten, and the days which ought to be observed as holy by individual Christians, independently of any regulations of the Christian Church on these subjects.<sup>a</sup> The Jewish converts, who were probably a minority in numbers, fearing lest some legal defect might possibly attach to any meat that they could buy for food at Rome, took refuge in vegetarianism: "He that is weak eateth herbs."<sup>b</sup> And they also clung to the observances of days and seasons which they had held sacred in their old Jewish life.<sup>c</sup> With all this the converts from heathenism had no sympathy;<sup>d</sup> and they were disposed to treat with a rough intolerance the scruples of men whom they thought and spoke of as "weak."

The Apostle, Jew though he was by birth, held that the converts from heathenism were substantially right in their contention.<sup>e</sup> But he did not approve of their scornful and impatient way of urging it.<sup>f</sup> They took delight in words and acts which caused much distress to the Jewish converts. They were for stamping out observances which their taste and their reason condemned. The Apostle held that these private observances were of no importance, except as representing an intention of serving God;<sup>g</sup> and that the strength of mind on which the Gentile converts prided

<sup>a</sup> Rom. xiv. 2-6.<sup>b</sup> *Ib.* 2.<sup>c</sup> *Ib.* 5.<sup>d</sup> *Ib.* 10.<sup>e</sup> *Ib.* 14.<sup>f</sup> *Ib.* 20.<sup>g</sup> *Ib.* 17, 18.

themselves ought to enable them to enter considerably into the point of view of their Jewish opponents.

“We,” he tells them, “that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.”<sup>a</sup> And then he adds as a reason, that “even Christ pleased not Himself.”<sup>b</sup> He might have illustrated this by referring to many acts in our Lord’s life, and especially to His voluntary Passion and Death upon the Cross. But he does refer to a passage in the sixty-ninth psalm: “As it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.”<sup>c</sup>

Now, this psalm is ascribed to David by the inscription, and also by St. Paul himself in another quotation from it which he makes in this very Epistle.<sup>d</sup> The psalm suits David’s circumstances during his flight from Jerusalem at the time of Absalom’s rebellion more accurately than any known circumstances in the lifetime of Jeremiah, or of any of those writers after the Captivity, to which some fanciful critics would nowadays assign it. But although the psalm was David’s, and David, in it, is describing his own troubles, a Jewish Christian would not have been surprised at St. Paul’s applying its words to our Lord Jesus Christ. For he would have known

<sup>a</sup> Rom. xv. 1, 2.

<sup>b</sup> *Ib.* 3.

<sup>c</sup> *Ib.* 3; Ps. lxi. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. xi. 9; cf. Ps. lxi. 22, 23.

that the Jewish doctors, or some of them, had already understood these words of the promised Messiah. And as he believed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, he had no difficulty in following the Apostle, when the Apostle used David's account of his own troubles as an account of the sorrows of Jesus; since, in his sufferings as well as in his royalty, David was a type of the Messiah. The Jewish convert would have felt with the Apostle that, if it was true that the rebukes of the enemies of the reign of God in Israel fell on David, who in his day represented it, much more true was this of our Lord Jesus Christ in a later age. He, in very deed, "pleased not Himself;" since He endured reproach and sorrow for the sake of the Father and to do His Will.

A Jewish Christian, then, would have had no difficulty about the quotation. But with a convert from heathenism the case would have been different. Whether he was a Roman, or a Greek settler in Rome, but especially if he was a Greek, he would have had many difficulties to get over in accepting the Old Testament at all; it would have been foreign to his whole tone of thought. He would have understood the attraction of the teaching, and the redeeming love of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he would only have accepted the Old Testament on our Lord's authority, and he would have doubted, at any rate at first, whether, with his mental antecedents, he had very much to learn from it. And therefore St. Paul's use of

link  
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David =  
Messiah  
Jesus =  
Messiah

it, on this and other occasions, would have seemed to him to be arbitrary and unintelligible. Why, he would have asked, should a psalm written by David, and referring to David's personal circumstances more than a thousand years before, be thus used to portray a feature of the life and character of our Lord Jesus Christ? This, then, was the difficulty which St. Paul had in his eye; and he meets it by laying down a broad principle, which includes a great deal else besides. "Whatsoever things," he says—and therefore among the rest this sixty-ninth psalm—"were written aforetime" in the Jewish Scriptures "were written for the learning" or instruction of us Christians, that we, through the patience which those Scriptures enjoin, and the comfort which they administer, might have hope in this life and beyond it.

Let us consider some of the truths which this statement of the Apostle implies.

I.

It implies, first of all, the trustworthiness of the Old Testament. I say its trustworthiness; I do not go so far, for the moment, as to say its inspiration. Unless a book or a man be trustworthy, it is impossible to feel confidence in it or in him; and confidence in an instructor is a first condition of receiving instruction to any good purpose. Now, if this be so, it shows that the Apostle would have had nothing to do with any

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estimate of the books of the Old Testament which is fatal to belief in their trustworthiness. We may have noticed that, when estimates of this kind are put forward, they are commonly prefaced by the observation that the Church has never defined what inspiration is ; and it is left to be inferred that a book may still be in some singular sense inspired, although the statements which it contains are held by the critic to be opposed to the truth of history or to the truth of morals. It is doubtless true that no authoritative definition of the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, of what it does and does not permit or imply, has been propounded by the Church of Christ ; just as she has propounded no definition of the manner and measure of the action of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."<sup>a</sup> Our Lord's words apply to an inspired book no less than to a sanctified soul ; but at the same time, both in the case of the soul and of the book, we can see that there are certain things inconsistent with the Holy Spirit's agency. Just as wilful sin is incompatible with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul, so inveracity is incompatible with the claim of a book to have been inspired by the Author of all truth.

Thus, to take an example. In the Book of Deuteronomy long addresses are ascribed to Moses,<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> St. John iii. 8.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. i. 1, etc. ; v. 1, etc.

and Moses describes a series of events of which he claims to have been an eye-witness.<sup>a</sup> If, then, we are told that these addresses were really unspoken and these events unwitnessed by Moses; that the 'dramatized' or, to speak plainly, fictitious, account of them was composed by some Jew, with a fine idealizing faculty, who lived many centuries after Moses; and this, although the book was undoubtedly imposed upon the conscience of the Jewish people, at any rate, after the Exile, as the work of Moses himself;—we must observe that such a representation is irreconcilable with the veracity of the book, which by its use of the name of the Great Lawgiver claims an authority that, according to the critics in question, does not belong to it. Or, if that striking prediction in the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel, about King Antiochus Epiphanes,<sup>b</sup> was really, as has been asserted, written after the events referred to,<sup>c</sup> and thrown into the form of prediction by some scribe of the second century before Christ, in order to rouse and encourage the Jews in their long struggle with the Græco-Syrian power,—then it must be said that the book in which it occurs is not trustworthy; the writer is endeavouring to

assuming prediction  
 of the purpose of  
 the book of  
 Daniel.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. ix. 16; x. 1-5, etc.

<sup>b</sup> Dan. viii. 23-25.

<sup>c</sup> This theory is borrowed by modern Rationalism from Porphyry, who devoted his twelfth "Discourse against the Christians" to a refutation of the claims of the book to be considered a prophecy. Cf. S. Hieron., *Præf. in Dan.*; Dr. Westcott, art. "The Book of Daniel," in *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*; Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet*, pref., x., xi.

produce a national enthusiasm by means of a representation which he must have known to be contrary to fact.

No doubt language and history are sciences which will have their say about the books of the Old Testament ; and I am far from implying that their greatest masters are committed to the opinions just referred to. What we have to take note of is that, unless there be such a thing as the inspiration of inveracity, we must choose between the authority of some of our modern critics, and the retention of any belief in the inspiration of the books which they handle after this fashion ; nay, more, of any considerable belief in the permanent value of these books as sources of Christian or of human instruction.

Nobody now expects to be instructed by the false Decretals, because all the world knows that they were composed in the ninth century, with more objects than one, but especially with a view to build up the fabric of papal authority, by making the first bishops of Rome write as they might have written had they lived seven or eight hundred years later than they did.\*

Certainly every trustworthy book is not inspired ; our booksellers' shops are full of honest books,

\* Professor Simson, in his *Entstehung der Pseudo-Isidorischen Fälschungen*, etc., seems to have proved that these documents were forged at Le Mans, under Bishop Aldrich. How does this enterprise differ *morally* from the composition, say, of Deuteronomy or the Chronicles, as it is conceived of by the new school of destructive criticism ?



which make no pretence to inspiration. But a book claiming inspiration must at least be trustworthy; and a literature which is said to be inspired for the instruction of the world must not be held by its professed exponents and defenders to fall below the moral level which is required for the ordinary purposes of human intercourse.

For Christians it will be enough to know that our Lord Jesus Christ set the seal of His infallible sanction on the whole of the Old Testament. He found the Hebrew Canon as we have it in our hands to-day, and He treated it as an authority which was above discussion. Nay, more; He went out of His way—if we may reverently speak thus—to sanction not a few portions of it which modern scepticism rejects. When He would warn His hearers against the dangers of spiritual relapse, He bids them remember “Lot’s wife.”<sup>a</sup> When He would point out how worldly engagements may blind the soul to a coming judgment, He reminds them how men ate, and drank, and married, and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all.<sup>b</sup> If He would put His finger on a fact in past Jewish history which, by its admitted reality, would warrant belief in His own coming Resurrection, He points to Jonah’s being three days and three nights in the whale’s belly.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xvii. 32.

<sup>b</sup> *Ib.* 27.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matt. xii. 40. Cf. Pusey, *Minor Prophets*, p. 263: “It is instructive that the writer who, disbelieving the miracles of the Book of Jonah, ‘restores his history’ [Bunsen],

If, standing on the Mount of Olives, with the Holy City at His feet, He would quote a prophecy the fulfilment of which would mark that its impending doom had at last arrived, He desires His disciples to flee to the mountains when they shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place.<sup>a</sup> Are we to suppose that in these and other<sup>b</sup> references to the Old Testament our Lord was only using *ad hominem* arguments, or talking down to the level of a popular ignorance which He did not Himself share? Not to point out the inconsistency of this supposition with His character as a perfectly sincere religious Teacher, it may be observed that in the Sermon on the Mount He marks off those features of the popular Jewish religion which He rejects<sup>c</sup> or modifies, in a manner which makes it certain that, had He not Himself believed in the historic truth of the events and persons to which He thus refers, He would have said so. But did He then share a popular belief which our higher knowledge has shown to be popular ignorance? and was He Whom His Apostle believed to be full

has also to 'restore the history' of the Saviour of the world by omitting His testimony to them. . . . Our Lord Himself attested that this miracle on Jonah was an image of His own entombment and Resurrection. He compares the preaching of Jonah with His own. He compares it as a real history, as He does the coming of the Queen of Sheba to hear the wisdom of Solomon."

<sup>a</sup> St. Matt. xxiv. 15.

<sup>b</sup> St. John v. 46, 47; cf. Deut. xviii. 15, 18, etc.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matt. v. 27-48.

of grace and truth,<sup>a</sup> and “in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,”<sup>b</sup> indeed mistaken as to the real worth of those Scriptures to which He so often and so confidently appealed? There are those who profess to bear the Christian name, and yet do not shrink from saying as much as this. But they will find it difficult to persuade mankind that, if He could be mistaken on a matter of such strictly religious importance as the value of the sacred literature of His countrymen, He can be safely trusted about anything else. The trustworthiness of the Old Testament is, in fact, inseparable from the trustworthiness of our Lord Jesus Christ; and if we believe that He is the true Light of the world, we shall close our ears against suggestions impairing the credit of those Jewish Scriptures which have received the stamp of His Divine authority.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> St. John i. 14.

<sup>b</sup> Col. ii. 3.

<sup>c</sup> On this serious subject, there is often a singular confusion between limitation of knowledge and the utterance through ignorance of that which is in fact untrue. Our Lord has told us that on one subject His knowledge was limited. We have no reason for supposing that it was limited on any other. But if our Lord *as Man* did not know the day and hour of the judgment (St. Mark xiii. 32), He did not as Man claim to know it. Had He told us that the real value of the books of the Old Testament was hidden from Him, or had He never referred to them, there would have been no conflict between modern so-called “critical” speculations and His Divine authority. But if the Apostles “beheld His glory,” “full,” not only “of grace,” but “of truth” (St. John i. 14); if, on the one hand, He knew what was in man (St. John ii. 25), and, on the other, as the Only Begotten Son Which is in the bosom of the Father, “declared” Him Whom no man hath

## II.

But the Apostle's statement implies, secondly, that the Jewish Scriptures have a world-wide and

seen at any time (St. John i. 18), is it conceivable that He could say, "Moses wrote of Me" (St. John v. 46), in utter ignorance of the (presumed) fact that the book to which He was principally alluding (Dent. xviii. 13, 14; but cf. also Gen. iii. 15; xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18; xlix. 10) was really compiled by a "dramatizing" Jew in the reign of Josiah; or that He could have appealed to Ps. cx., as He is reported in St. Mark xii. 36; St. Luke xx. 42 (in St. Matthew He is reported as less directly asserting the Davidic authorship, xxii. 42-46), if that psalm never really existed before the date of Simon Maccabæus?

The hypothesis that, in consequence of imperfect information, our Lord taught erroneously on the subject of the historical worth of the Old Testament history, appears to be inconsistent with the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation as asserted by the Church against Nestorius. According to that doctrine, all the acts and words of the One Christ are the acts and words of God the Son, although performed and uttered through the Human Nature which He assumed (cf. Labbé and Cossart, Conc. III. 408, anath. 4). Erroneous teaching is as little compatible with the Union of His two Natures in a single, and that a Divine, Person, as is sinful action (St. Thomas, *Summ.*, pt. iii. quæst. xv. a. 3). Language is sometimes used which appears to imply that, unless our Lord's Human Intellect was not only limited in knowledge but also liable to error, He did not assume "a true human nature." But this is to forget the very purpose with which He condescended to become Man. As Hooker observes, "the very cause of His taking upon Him our nature was to better the quality and to advance the condition thereof, although in no sort to abolish the substance which He took, nor to infuse into it the natural forces and properties of His Deity" (*Eccl. Pol.*, V. liv. 5). And thus "to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; to be the Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Resurrection; to be the Peace of the whole world, the Hope of the righteous, the Heir of all things; to be that Supreme

enduring value. They were written, he says, for our instruction; that is, for the instruction of the Apostolic Church, which confidently aspired to

Head whereunto all power in heaven and earth is given,—these are not honours common unto Christ with other men; they are titles above the dignity and worth of any which were but a mere man, *yet true of Christ even in that He is Man*, but Man with Whom Deity is personally joined and unto Whom it hath added these excellences which make Him more than worthy thereof" (*Ib.*). It is in accordance with this principle that the Church has hitherto believed Him to be an infallible Teacher, and especially when He is touching on matters which, like the Old Testament Scriptures, directly concern God's revelation of Himself to man. To say that He shows no signs of transcending the historical knowledge of His age is to imply that He shared with the rabbis around Him grave errors respecting the real worth of the Old Testament literature, and that He was in this respect inferior to modern scholars who take the negative side in questions of Old Testament criticism. To assert that, while thus imperfectly informed, He used and sanctioned the Old Testament as He did, is to go further: it is to imply that, as a Teacher of Religion, He was a teacher of error.

Those persons who unhappily have persuaded themselves that this is the case, and yet happily shrink from rejecting His authority altogether, sometimes attempt to save themselves by projecting a distinction between critical or historical and spiritual truth. If He was in error respecting the historical value of the Pentateuch or Daniel, He could not, they think, err in what He tells us as to the Nature of God or the duty of man. But such persons must know that at this hour His authority in these spiritual matters is as fiercely challenged as in those questions which they somewhat arbitrarily describe as "critical." And He Himself has taught us that we must receive His teaching as a whole, if we are to receive it at all. "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (St. John iii. 12).

Perhaps it would be difficult to find a better statement of whatever we know about the knowledge possessed by our

embrace the world. They were written, then, for all human beings, in all places and in all ages. Could such a statement be made about any other national literature, ancient or modern?

Some instruction, no doubt, is to be gathered from the literature of every people; the products of the human mind, in all its phases, and in circumstances the most unpromising, have generally something to tell us. But, on the other hand, there is a great deal in the wisest uninspired literatures that cannot properly be described as permanently or universally instructive; much in that of ancient Greece; much in that of our

Lord's Human Soul than is given in the following words: "Quia nulla perfectio creaturis exhibita, animæ Christi, quæ est creaturarum excellentissima, deneganda est, convenienter præter cognitionem quâ Dei essentiam vidit, et omnia in ipsâ, triplex alia cognitio est ei attribuenda; una quidem experimentalis sicut aliis hominibus in quantum aliqua per sensus cognovit, et competit naturæ humanæ; alia verò divinitus infusa ad cognoscenda omnia illa ad quæ naturalis cognitio hominis se extendit vel extendere potest. . . . Sed quia Christus secundum humanam naturam non solum fuit reparator naturæ, sed etiam gratiæ propagator, affuit ei etiam tertia cognitio qua plenissimè cognovit quidquid ad mysteria gratiæ potest pertinere." He adds, "Manifestum est quod res sensibiles per temporis successionem magis ac magis sensibus corporis experiendo cognovit, et ideo solum quantum ad cognitionem experimentalem Christus potuit perficere, secundum illud Luc. ii. 52" (St. Th., *Opusc.*, i. 216, Opp., vol. xvi., ed. Parmæ). Especially on our Lord's "growth" in wisdom (St. Luke ii. 52) while He yet was "full of truth" (St. John i. 14), consult Wilberforce, *Doct. of Incarnation*, pp. 97-105. See also the elaborate discussion in De Lugo, Opp. iv., *De Myst. Inc.*, dispp. xviii.-xxi., where, however, some exceptions may be taken to the interpretation of St. Mark xiii. 32.

own country. And therefore, when an Apostle says of a great collection of books of various characters, and on various subjects—embodying the legislation, history, poetry, morals, of a small Eastern people—that whatsoever was contained in them had been set down for the instruction of men of another and a wider faith, living in a later age, and, by implication, for the instruction of all human beings,—this is certainly, when we think of it, an astonishing assertion. Clearly, if the Apostle is to be believed, these books cannot be like any other similar collection of national laws, records, poems, proverbs; there must be in them some quality or qualities which warrant this lofty estimate.

Then we may observe that, as books rise in the scale of excellence, whatever their authorship or outward form, they tend towards exhibiting a permanence and universality of interest; they rise above the local and personal accidents of their production, and discover qualities which address themselves to the mind and heart of the human race.

This is, as we all know, the case to a great extent with Shakespeare. The ascendancy of his genius is entirely independent of the circumstances of his life, of which we know scarcely anything, and of the dramatic form into which he threw his ideas. He has been read, re-read, commented on, discussed, by nine generations of Englishmen; his phrases have passed into the language, so that

we constantly quote him without knowing it; his authority as an analyst and exponent of human nature has steadily grown with the advancing years. Nay, despite the eminently English form of his writings, German critics have claimed him as, by reason of the wealth of his thought, a virtual fellow-countryman; and even the peoples of the Latin races, who would have greater difficulty in understanding him, have not been slow to offer him the homage of their sympathy and admiration.

And yet, by what an interval is Shakespeare parted from the books of the Hebrew Scriptures! His grand dramatic creations, we feel, after all are only the workmanship of a shrewd human observer, with the limitations of a human point of view, and with that restricted moral authority which is all that the highest human genius can claim. But here is a Book which provides for human nature as a whole; and which makes this provision with an insight and comprehensiveness that does not belong to the capacity of the most gifted men. Could any merely human authors have stood the test which the Old Testament has stood? Think what it has been to the Jewish people throughout the tragic vicissitudes of their wonderful history. Think what it has been to Christendom. For nineteen centuries it has formed the larger part of the religious handbook of the Christian Church; it has shaped Christian hopes; it has largely governed Christian legislation; it has supplied the language for Christian prayer



and praise. The noblest and saintliest souls in Christendom have one after another fed their souls on it, or even on fragments of it; taking a verse, and shutting the spiritual ear to everything else, and in virtue of the concentrated intensity with which they have thus sought, for days, and weeks, and months, and years, to penetrate the inmost secrets of this or that fragment of its consecrated language, rising to heroic heights of effort and endurance. Throughout the Christian centuries the Old Testament has been worked like a mine, which is as far from being exhausted to-day as in the Apostolic age. Well might the old Hebrew poet cry, "I am as glad of Thy Word as one that findeth great spoils."<sup>a</sup> "The Law of the Lord is an undefiled Law, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes. . . . More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb."<sup>b</sup>

Even those parts of the Old Testament which seem least promising at first sight have some instruction to give us, if we will only look out for it. Those genealogies which occur in historical books sometimes remind us of the awful responsibility which attaches to the transmission, with the gift of physical life, of a type

<sup>a</sup> Ps. cxix. 162.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. xix. 7, 8, 10.

of character, which we have ourselves formed or modified, to another, perhaps a distant generation ; or sometimes they suggest the care with which all that bore on the human ancestry of our Lord was preserved in the records of the people of revelation. Those accounts, too, of fierce war and indiscriminate slaughter, such as the extermination of the Canaanites, pourtray the vigour and thoroughness with which we should endeavour to extirpate sins that may long have settled in our hearts. Those minute ritual directions of the Law, which might at first sight read like the rubrics of a system that had for ever passed away, should, as they might, bring before us first one and then another aspect of that to which they pointed—the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### III.

But this last illustration suggests something further which is implied in the Apostle's statement, namely, that a second or deeper sense of Scripture constantly underlies the primary, literal, superficial sense. Unless there be such a second sense in the Old Testament, the Apostle's quotation from the sixty-ninth psalm is unintelligible.

That a narrative should have two senses, one which it presents to the reader at first sight, and another which lies deeper, but is only discovered on reflection, may at first strike us as strange. But Holy Scripture itself tells us that this is the case.

Nobody would expect to find a second sense in an uninspired book, however well written. In Lord Macaulay's *History of England*, for instance, we read what he has to say about the events which he describes, and there is an end of it. But this is not true of the Old Testament Scriptures. If we go to the New Testament to discover how we should read the Old, we find ourselves constantly guided to search for a spiritual sense which underlies the literal sense. Thus the account in Genesis<sup>a</sup> of Abraham's relations with Hagar and Sarah, with Ishmael and Isaac, might, at first, seem to have no further object than that of displaying the historical source of the relations which existed in after-ages between Israel and certain desert tribes. But if we turn to the Epistle to the Galatians,<sup>b</sup> the Apostle bids us penetrate much deeper, and see in those two ancient mothers the Jewish and Christian covenants, or Churches, and in their children, here the spiritual slaves of the Mosaic Law, and there the enfranchised sons of the mother of us all—the Christian Jerusalem. In like manner St. Paul teaches the Corinthians to recognize in the Exodus from Egypt, and in the events which followed it, not merely a series of ancient historical occurrences, but distinct foreshadowings of Christian privileges and Christian failings.<sup>c</sup> These things, he says, happened for types or patterns of something beyond them, and were thus

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xvi. 1-13.    <sup>b</sup> Gal. iv. 21-31.    <sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. x. 1-10.

written "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."<sup>a</sup> These are but two out of many illustrations; and in the early Church there was a great school of interpreters which concerned itself almost exclusively with the discovery and exhibition of this second sense of Scripture. That some of these interpreters may have made mistakes, whether of fancifulness or exaggeration, is probable enough; but the principle on which they went to work was taught them by the Apostles. They felt the depth and resources of the Divine Word; they discovered in its wealth of meanings a sort of sensible proof of its inspiration. They dwelt upon the fact that the Divine Mind sees each event, not as we do, singly, but in relation to other events, which, at whatever distance of time, would have some sort of correspondence with it;<sup>b</sup> sees the spiritual in the material, the eternal in the temporal, that which to man is future in that which to man is present, since before the Divine Intelligence all is always present, and there is room for neither past nor future.

On some such considerations does the doctrine of a second sense rest; but in any case it is warranted by the distinct teaching of the New Testament, and it alone enables us to understand

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. x. 11.

<sup>b</sup> St. Thom. in *Gal.*, lect. vii., "Deus, non solum voces ad designandum accomodat (quod etiam homo facere potest), sed etiam res ipsas" (cf. Windischmann, *Galaterbrief*, p. 133, *sqq.*).

how some difficult parts of the Old are written for our learning. Take for instance, the Song of Solomon. Read in its literal sense, it describes scenes in the court of Solomon which might doubtless be paralleled in those of other Eastern princes, but which hardly correspond to the Apostle's description of being written for our instruction, that we, through the patience and comfort which it inspires, might have hope. But if, with the Jewish Talmud and the overwhelming majority of Christian interpreters, we not only recognize a second sense lying beneath the letter of the book, but also understand that this sense is much more important than the primary or literal sense; if, as the headings of our Authorized Version suggest, we see in the "beloved" \* our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the bride the Church or the Christian soul, —the book becomes a repertory of the highest spiritual truth, which, so far as we can see, could hardly have been adequately expressed in any other form. The necessity of recognizing some such sense in the book has been all but universally admitted by Christian interpreters; and those modern schools or groups of scholars which have rejected it have ended by abandoning, more or less decisively, the teaching value of the book altogether.

\* This interpretation has its roots in Old Testament language, describing the relations of God with Israel (Exod. xxxiv. 15, 16; Ps. lxxiii. 27; Jer. iii. 1-11, etc.) as that of a bridegroom and bride.

Indeed, the neglect of this secondary and spiritual sense of Scripture has sometimes led Christians to misapply the Old Testament very seriously. Thus both the soldiers of Raymond of Toulouse, who made war on the Albigenses in the thirteenth century, and the English Puritans, who made war on the Church in the seventeenth, appeal to the early wars of the Israelites as a sanction for indiscriminate slaughter. They forgot that the promulgation of the law of charity by our Lord had made such an appeal impossible. They forgot that most instructive scene outside the Samaritan village which had refused Him a welcome, and how, when two of His first followers would fain have had Him call down the fire from heaven, He had significantly replied, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."\* Dwelling on the letter of the narrative of Joshua, they missed its true and lasting, but deeper import. They failed to comprehend the eternal witness which it bears to God's hatred of moral evil, even though it be veiled beneath a comparatively advanced material civilization; and the duty of making war, incessant, implacable, exterminating war, upon those passions which too easily erect their Jericho and their Ai in the Christian soul, and are only conquered by that resolute perseverance and courage which is armed with a strength that comes from heaven.

This second sense of Holy Scripture is especially

\* St. Luke ix. 55.

instructive as guiding us to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the End, as of the Law, so of the whole of the Old Testament, to every one that believeth.<sup>a</sup> No doubt the literal sense of the Old Testament often points to Him. Psalms like the twenty-second and the hundred and tenth, and prophecies such as Isaiah's of the Virgin Birth<sup>b</sup> and of the Man of Sorrows,<sup>c</sup> can properly refer to no one else. But there is much which has a primary reference to some saint, or hero, or event of the day, which yet in its deeper significance points on to Him; and this depends, not on any arbitrary or fanciful feeling, but on the principle that He is the Recapitulation,<sup>d</sup> as an early Christian writer expressed it, of all that is excellent in humanity; that all that is true, heroic, saintly, pathetic, in human lives, and that we see elsewhere in fragments, meets in Him as the Perfect Representative of the race. Only when this is understood do we read the Old Testament with Christian eyes; read it as the first Christians read it. Only then do we understand the full meaning and purpose of much which is else veiled from our sight; of those great deliverances from Egypt and Babylon, foreshadowings of a greater deliverance beyond; of those elaborate rites of purification and sacrifice, which have no lasting meaning apart from the One Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; of that succession of saints and heroes

<sup>a</sup> Rom. x. 4.<sup>c</sup> *Ib.* liii. 1-12.<sup>b</sup> Isa. vii. 14.<sup>d</sup> St. Iren., *Adv. Hær.*, iii. 18. 1.

who, with all their imperfections, point onwards and upwards to One Who dignifies their feeble and broken lives, by making them, in not a few respects, anticipations of Himself. Only then do we understand the truth of that profound saying of St. Augustine, that as the Old Testament is manifested in the New, so the New Testament is latent in the Old.\*

The Second Sunday in Advent might almost be called the yearly festival of Holy Scripture. The Collect for the day is found within the cover of more than half our Bibles; and it is based upon the words which we have been considering. But while St. Paul in these words is thinking only of the Old Testament, the Collect expands his meaning when it reminds us that *all* Holy Scriptures are written for our learning—the New Testament no less than the Old. Well would it be for us to take that truth seriously to heart, and to lay out our time so as to act upon it. The Bible is indeed the most interesting book in the world; to the poet, to the historian, to the philosopher, to the student of human nature, to the lover of the picturesque and of the marvellous, to the archæologist, to the man of letters, to the man of affairs. To each of these it has much to say that he will find nowhere else; but none of them, if he confines

\* St. Aug., *Quæst.* 73 in *Exod.*: “Multum et solidè significatur ad Vetus Testamentum timorem potius pertinere, sicut ad Novum dilectionem, quamquam et in Vetere Novum lateat, et in Novo Vetus pateat.”



himself to his special interest, will secure the gift which the Bible was really intended to convey.

When you entered this great temple of Christ this afternoon, there were many separate subjects which it might have suggested to you: the faultless proportions of the building, the materials of which it is composed, the skill and genius of its architect, the cost of its construction, the monuments of the dead which everywhere meet the eye, the events in the history of our Church and country which have been witnessed within its walls or on its site; and then again, the accessories of Divine service, the various pieces of religious furniture in the choir and sanctuary, the beauty of the music, the order and sequence of Psalm, and Lesson, and Creed, and anthem. Yet these are all, the highest and the lowest, but details, if regarded with reference to that supreme purpose which this cathedral itself, and all that is in it, and all that takes place in it, should certainly suggest. That purpose is nothing less than leading each soul here present, ay, and a great company of souls in unison, to ascend to true communion with Him Who is the Infinite and the Eternal; to leave behind them, to escape from, to break, to trample on, as the need of each may be, those earthly allurements or fetters, which would seduce or hold them back from the true End of their existence; to forget, for a while, the outer world and life, its pleasures, its annoyances, its intrigues, its passions, its disappointments, its sorrows, its ambitions, its jealousies, its splendours,

its degradations, and to rise, in the prophet's phrase, with wings as eagles,<sup>a</sup> towards the Sun of the moral world—the Father and Redeemer and Sanctifier of our spirits. And when we take up the Bible, we enter in spirit a far more splendid temple, which it needed some fifteen centuries to build, and the variety and resource of which distances all comparison—a temple built, not out of stone and marble, but with human words, yet enshrining within it, for the comfort and warning, the correction and encouragement, of every human soul, no other and no less than the Holy and Eternal Spirit. Of that temple the Old Testament is the nave, with its side aisles of psalm and prophecy; and the Gospels are the choir—the last Gospel, perhaps, the very sanctuary; while around and behind are the Apostolic Epistles and the Apocalypse, each a gem of beauty, each supplying an indispensable feature to the majestic whole. With what joy should we daily enter that temple! with what profound reverence should we cross its threshold! with what care should we mark and note—where nothing is meaningless—each feature, each ornament, that decorates wall, or pillar, or window, or roof! how high should be set our expectations of the blessings that may be secured within it! how open, and yet how submissive, should be our hearts to the voices—they are not of this world—that might touch and change and purify them!

<sup>a</sup> Isa. xl. 31.

As we drift—along the swift relentless current of time—towards the end of life; as days, and weeks, and months, and years follow each other in breathless haste, and we reflect now and then for a moment that, at any rate for us, much of this earthly career has passed irrevocably; what are the interests, the thoughts, ay, the books which really command our attention? what do we read and leave unread? what time do we give to the Bible? No other book, let us be sure of it, can equally avail to prepare us for that which lies before us; for the unknown anxieties and sorrows which are sooner or later the portion of most men and women; for the gradual approach of death; for the passage into the unseen world; for the sights and sounds which then will burst upon us; for the period, be it long or short, of waiting and preparation; for the Throne and the Face of the Eternal Judge. Looking back from that world, how shall we desire to have made the most of our best guide to it! how shall we grudge the hours we have wasted on any—be they thoughts, or books, or teachers—which only belong to the things of time!

“O Lord, Thy Word endureth for ever in heaven: Thy Truth also remaineth from one generation to another. . . . If my delight had not been in Thy Law, I should have perished in my trouble. I will never forget Thy commandments, for with them Thou hast quickened me.”\*

\* Ps. cxix. 89, 90, 92, 93.



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